PATRIOT - NEW DELHI 21 FEB 85

'Sappers' cruise round-the-world

Six intrepid officers of the Indian Army, who have just completed a sailing cruise from London to Bombay will undertake an exciting venture in ocean sailing in September this year, reports PTI.

The officers from the Corps of Engineers, popularly known as the "Sappers" will cruise round the world covering a distance of 48,000 kms in 18 months, making them the first Indians to embark on an ocean enterprise of such magnitude.

The sailors arrived in Bombay on 1 February this year after a 112-day cruise from Gossport on "Trisana", a Swan class yacht, covering a distance of 12,320 km.

After complete rechecking and repainting of the boat, they will undertake the global cruise covering Cape of Good Hope, St Helena Island, Ascension Island, Barbados, Panama Canal, Galapagos Island, Auckland, Java, Singapore, Colombo and back to Bombay.

The six members of the crew led by Maj K S Rao are Lt Col T P S Choudhry (watch leader), Maj A P Singh (navigator), Capt A K Singh (watch leaders), Lt S Shekhar (galley-in-charge) and Lt C Bharti (radio officer).

Maj A Bhattacharya and Maj S N Mathur will be sailing on one of the legs of the cruise. Before embarking on the cruise sponsored by the Sapper Adventure Foundation, the sailors will undergo refresher training in navigation, morse training, meteorology and passage planning, a training cruise will also be organised to Goa and Laccadives.

During the London-Bombay cruise, the sailors touched the ports of Alderney, La Goruna (Spain), Lisbon, Gibraltar, Ibiza, Malta, Agious Nikolas (Greece), Said, Sudan, Aden, Sallalah, and Muscat.

Enroute the sailors experienced very bad weather especially in the Bay of Biscay, Mediterranean Sea, and the Red Sea where they were hit by two storms and at least ten gales.

In the treacherous Bay of Biscay, the sailors experienced a severe storm, with wind speed being over 50 nots, waves 30-40 feet high and very heavy rain, which even damaged their boat.

Narrating their adventure, Lt Col Choudhry and Maj Rao said that during most part of the journey, they had to 'beat' against the winds.

A fresh coat of 'gale' and anti-fouling painting will be put, water tanks modified for a larger capacity of 130 gallons, all rigging checked for safety and all damages repaired on the boat. The yacht is 36 feet in length, 11 feet in width, and with six feet draft.

Maj Rao said that the yacht has been equipped with the basic requirements to sail around the world.